3: Bowen C-4 (1945-1947) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

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MARINE INDUSTRIES OF EASTERN ARABIA

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THE Persian Gulf coast of Saudi Arabia is desolate in the extreme: in many places one travels along the beach for dozens of miles without seeing a living soul. But there is a sprinkling of old coastal towns, whose inhabitants for the most part gain their livelihood from the sea. Among them are Jubail, long a port of entry for the capital city of Riyadh, 235 miles inland; Dammam, seaport for the Qatif and Safwa oases (a deep-water pier has recently been constructed at Dammam); Al Khobar and Oqair, ports for the great oasis of Hofuf (Hasa). To these have been added of late years Arabian American Oil Company settlements at Ras al Mish'ab (a construction camp and port facilities), Nejma (a refinery and camp), and Ras Tanura (pipeline terminus and cargo wharf).

FISHING

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Foremost among the marine activities of the older coastal towns is fishing. Although there are far fewer species of fish in the Persian Gulf than in the Indian Ocean, they are present in greater numbers, particularly the porgies, than one might expect in so warm a body of salt water, and fish form a welcome addition to the diet in a land where food is pitifully scarce.

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Fishing methods range from a simple hand line to large and complicated fishweirs. On land the hand line is used mainly by small boys, who, like the small fry of any other country, enjoy fishing. Since there is an almost complete lack of jetties and piers, these young fishermen have to stand on the beach and heave their weighted lines as far as they can (Fig. 2). When the fish are running, these youngsters line the shores, and their catch is sometimes sizable. Hand lines are indispensable on every dhow and are thrown out as soon as the boat is in open water.

A more advanced type of fishing uses the throw net—a circular net about 16 feet in diameter made of quarter-inch-mesh netting. The periphery is weighted with small lead weights, then doubled back toward the center and tied at 12-inch intervals to form a continuous pocket some six inches deep. The fisherman walks in knee-deep water at low tide, holding his net —which he has folded and gathered with the perfection of a parachutist—

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5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
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plement of long heavy oars, so that they can be independent of the wind when necessary. One of these great diving boats moving out to sea is a sight long to be remembered. I once watched one of the largest Dibai boats leave for the pearl banks. During the winter these boats are hauled up on the sand within a lagoon that runs through the city. The great boat moved majestically down this lagoon and out to sea. There were fifteen to twenty enormous oars on each side and each oar was manned by two divers. The oarsmen swung down the lagoon with a stateliness that I have never seen surpassed, the men chanting as they worked, *"A billah mal, a billah mal,"* in a rhythm that had all the swing of a regiment off to war or a football team on its way to a game. There was a splendid silk flag flying at the stern, and the great ship went out to sea with every small boy in Dibai wishing he was on board. I felt the thrill of it myself, and the Baluch boy that I had with me as a medical assistant had hard work to keep both his feet on the ground. "Oh *Sahib,*" he said, "it makes me want to go with them."

However, once the pearl banks are reached, the work is hard and dangerous. The long oars are fastened in place so that they stretch out horizontally over the water and to each oar a rope is tied which carries a lead weight or a stone on its end. The diver stands on this weight as he descends, in order to get down quickly. Each diver has an assistant whose duty it is to haul up the weight as soon as the diver reaches the bottom, so that it may be ready for the next descent. There is a second rope which is fastened around the diver's waist. By this his assistant pulls him up when he gives the signal. This assistance is not necessary if the diving is in shallow